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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 002503

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STATE FOR AF/E AND A/S CARSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/12/17
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA - POLITICAL DISCONTENT A KEY FACTOR IN INCREASED
PUNTLAND VIOLENCE

REF: NAIROBI 2351; NAIROBI 2384

CLASSIFIED BY: Joe Trimble, Political Officer, State Department,
Somalia Unit, Embassy Nairobi; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

[11.](#) (C) Summary: The recent up tic in violence in Puntland appears to be due, in part, to al-Shabaab's ability to exploit political grievances against Puntland President Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamud "Faroole". On December 13 the Puntland Vice-President survived an IED attack on his convoy and on December 14 a roadside bomb killed three police officers on routine patrol in the commercial capital Bosasso. These attacks follow stepped up violence in Puntland in recent weeks (ref A). Multiple contacts tell us that President "Faroole" is viewed by many Puntlanders, who want a good relationship with south-central Somalia, to have overplayed his hand in October when he backed away from the TFG-Puntland agreement (ref B). Our contacts tell us "Faroole's" recent poor treatment of Ogaden clansmen in Puntland is also fueling local grievances and probably contributing to clan retribution mixed with al-Shabaab opportunism in the region. We are encouraging opinion makers and political players in Puntland to use their influence with "Faroole" and to encourage Puntlanders to politically, rather than militarily, confront the Puntland President. In addition, we are urging the Puntland administration to improve its relationship with the TFG, address clan tensions in Puntland, and develop a strategic security plan. End Summary.

[12.](#) (C) On December 13 a convoy escorting Puntland Vice President Col Shire was targeted by an IED 30 kilometers south of Bosasso. Shire was en route from Garowe to Bassaso. Shire survived the attack without harm but we are told two of his body guards were wounded. On the evening of December 14 three Puntland police officers from the special forces unit, Darawish, were killed in Bosasso while on routine patrols of the port town. These attacks follow stepped up violence in Puntland in recent weeks (ref A).

[13.](#) (C) A contact close to "Faroole" on December 16 told Somalia Unit PolOff that many Puntlanders, including many political elite within the Puntland administration, are disappointed President "Faroole" has not developed a strategic security vision that includes going after key criminal elements in the region and addressing underlying clan and political tensions in Puntland. In addition, multiple contacts tell us that President "Faroole" is viewed by many Puntlanders, who want a good relationship with south-central Somalia, to have mishandled an October meeting with TFG President Shekih Sharif in which he backed away from the TFG-Puntland agreement (ref b). Several Puntland contacts tell us the rising political discontent in Puntland is allowing al-Shabaab

to exploit local grievances and begin to "explore options" in Puntland. (Note: Al-Shabaab leaders in November publicly called for stepped up attacks against Puntland. End note.)

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Figure 1: Puntland Region President Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamud "Farole"

14. (C) Several Puntland-based contacts tell us that "Farooole" has come under increased pressure from the Ogaden clan after he handed several Ogaden clansmen, without trail, over to the Ethiopian security service in November. Our contacts tell us the Ethiopians alleged the clansmen were members of the Ethiopian insurgent group ONLF and that "Farooole" handed the men over without investigating the veracity of the claims. Our contacts also tell us Ogaden clan elders and other traditional leaders in Puntland condemned the "extradition" to Ethiopia and demanded "Farooole" meet with clan leaders in Nairobi and apologize to the clan at a wider meeting in Garowe. "Farooole" in November reportedly met some elders in Nairobi but, as of December 16, had not attended a meeting with the wider clan in Garowe. Many contacts tell us they think the recent attacks are a combination of clan retribution mixed with al-Shabaab opportunism in the region.

15. (C) Comment: We think it is very likely President

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"Farooole" will use the increase in violence to push for greater international support to his security services. However, we think augmented Puntland security services without a strategic security plan, a commitment to arrest known terrorist planners in Puntland, or efforts by "Farooole" to address underlying clan and political tensions in Puntland would enjoy little success. We are encouraging opinion makers and political players in Puntland to influence "Farooole" and to encourage Puntlanders to politically, rather than militarily, confront the Puntland President. In addition, we are urging the Puntland administration to improve its relationship with the TFG, address clan tensions in Puntland, and develop a strategic security plan.

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